



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board  
HMP Featherstone  
Featherstone  
Wolverhampton  
WV10 7PU

MoJ ref: SUB132056

27 February 2026

Dear Chair,

**HMP FEATHERSTONE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2023 – 31 OCTOBER 2024**

Thank you for your Board's annual report on HMP Featherstone. I am grateful for the effort and care that has gone into producing such a thorough and candid assessment of the prison over the past year, particularly in the context of the pressures you describe and the Board's reduced membership.

I was saddened to learn that there was one death in custody during the reporting period. Every death in prison is a tragedy. My thoughts are with his family and friends. I note your comments around ACCT documents not being correctly completed. Please be assured that any recommendations arising from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's investigation will be treated with the utmost seriousness.

I understand your frustration regarding the kitchen at HMP Featherstone and its need for constant maintenance. While it remains operational and cleanliness standards are maintained, the fabric of the space is poor and has not benefited from major investment for many years. Since your last report, the prison has moved beyond simply managing this situation. Alongside this, a specific bid to address the most degraded elements of the kitchen fabric, including floors and walls, is under consideration within the national estates programme. I cannot pre-empt funding decisions, but this represents a clear step forward in recognising the kitchen as a priority rather than a problem to be patched over indefinitely. In the meantime, the prison is acting locally to improve food provision. The Governor has confirmed that HMP Featherstone will implement the new Food in Prisons Framework over the coming year. This is intended to improve both the quality and nutritional value of meals and to address the inconsistencies you note in portion sizes and supervision at serveries. This reflects an expectation that standards should improve now, not only after capital works are completed.

More broadly, the Government is reforming how maintenance services are delivered across the prison estate. New facilities management contracts, due to take effect from 2027 are designed to provide more reliable services and reduce the backlog of repairs in older prisons. I appreciate that this will not resolve immediate concerns, but it forms part of a longer-term effort to stabilise and improve conditions. I know that the physical environment shapes everyday life in prison and that progress can feel slow. I expect officials to keep your Board informed as decisions are taken on the kitchen proposals and to be clear about what can be delivered and when.

The significant reforms contained in the Sentencing Act, which received Royal Assent on 22 January 2026 will provide the Courts with options to end the cycle of less serious offenders going in and out of prison. This includes the biggest ever expansion in tagging and the use of restriction zones to better protect victims. Alongside this, the probation budget will be increased by up to £700 million over the next three years to bolster community justice, including the probation service's resource and ability to tag offenders. The government is also investing in new technology to reduce admin so staff can focus on work that reduces reoffending.

While your report highlights the challenges posed by aging infrastructure and resource pressures, it also identifies areas of progress. It was pleasing to read that HMP Featherstone is judged to be generally safe, noting reductions in violence and fewer men withdrawing from the regime. The report also recognises positive developments in resettlement, education and library provision, including work that supports family relationships and rehabilitation. I welcome this recognition and am committed to sustaining and building on these strengths.

I note that your report has also raised some local concerns. The Governor will continue to keep you informed of any developments regarding these matters. HMPPS's comments in response to the other issue raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I very much appreciate the valuable role played by all members of the Independent Monitoring Boards operating throughout the prison estate and we are grateful for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP Featherstone.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Lord Timpson**  
**Minister for Prisons, Probation, and Reducing Reoffending**

## HMP FEATHERSTONE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 NOVEMBER 2023 – 31 OCTOBER 2024

### HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

#### **Mental health and transfer to appropriate inpatient care**

The Board reiterates concerns raised in previous reports about the management of prisoners experiencing acute mental illness, particularly the use of the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) and the need for more timely transfers to appropriate mental health inpatient settings.

Ensuring timely access to inpatient mental health care for prisoners who require it remains a shared priority for HMPPS, the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England. Since the last reporting period, progress has been made to reduce delays in transfers from prison to secure mental health hospitals. The Mental Health Act 2025 introduces a statutory 28-day time limit for the transfer of patients from prison and other places of detention to hospital where inpatient treatment is clinically indicated. NHS England has established a national Mental Health and Justice Strategic Advisory Group to oversee implementation of the statutory timescale and to address barriers to timely transfer.

In the Midlands, NHS England works with Mental Health Provider Collaboratives to accelerate prison transfers through improved care pathways and review of bed capacity. Progress is monitored through regional governance arrangements, and the West Midlands Health and Justice Commissioning team continues to chair a fortnightly multi agency meeting to review individual cases and support timely assessment and transfer, recognising that the availability of suitable beds remains a system constraint.

At HMP Featherstone, the prison continues to work closely with healthcare providers to ensure that prisoners in mental health crisis are identified promptly and referred appropriately. Over the past year, instances requiring transfer to hospital have been limited and where transfers were required, they were completed within the statutory 28-day timeframe. Where clinically indicated, prisoners awaiting transfer may be supported through access to regional 24-hour healthcare units, reducing reliance on the CSU.

HMPPS, NHS England and local healthcare partners will continue to monitor performance against the statutory transfer timescale and work together to ensure that prisoners with serious mental illness are able to access appropriate care as quickly as possible.